Lt.-Col. C. H. Weston,
Three Years with the New Zealanders.

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CHAPTER XII

PASSCHENDAELE

ON my return from leave I reported to Brigadier-General Hart, D.S.O., at the 4th Brigade Headquarters, and the same day took over the 3rd Battalion, which was then holding the Frelinghem sector.

Lieutenant-Colonel Cunningham very kindly consented to exchange my mare for Lieutenant-Colonel Fletcher's horse, and she and her groom Andrews came across. While I was away Andrews and my batman Lange had met with the experience of being bombed by aeroplanes. The transport of the 1st Machine Gun Company and the 2nd Battalion were together near Kortepyp, and the bombs landed in their midst. The spread of the exploding bomb is very low, and the animals that were killed, and they were many, mostly had their legs cut off . Andrews said, after the noise of the explosion, he heard only a long-drawn-out groan from the unfortunate animals, and then the rattle of picket chains and dull thuds as they fell. Among the losses were the two famous chestnut draught horses belonging to the 2nd Battalion.

I was only in the sector six days before we were relieved, and, after a few days in deserted Pont de Nieppe, moved with the whole Brigade to the training area between St. Omer and Boulogne. While I was in the trenches a very daring piece of work was done by Sergeant Pennefather, of Hawke's Bay Company. In daylight he swam the Lys, which divided us from the enemy, and, discovering a raft on their side of the river, made a ferry with it and with some telephone wire, also the property of the Hun. While there he reconnoitred the position of a night listening post, and after dark ferried three men and himself across and attacked the post. He himself was wounded, but three Germans were killed. Pennefather thoroughly deserved the Distinguished Conduct Medal which he received for his gallantry.

The 4th Brigade was not really a part of the New Zealand Division, but in September changed places with the 3rd N.Z.R.B., and came under General Russell's jurisdiction. The latter Brigade went North to dig for the French Army there.

In billets the Battalion was in clover. Headquarters were in the Village, and the companies scattered about in farm-houses around, except Wellington West Coast Company, who were in tents. The Area Officer, a Major in the Regular Army, did everything he could for our comfort, and we were very much indebted to him. The Château was a delightful change after the Flemish farm-yards. Its garden and lawns, though neglected, possessed some borders gay with scarlet begonias, and the band (converted gardeners temporarily) soon remedied all neglect. With the lawn cut, its edges trimmed, and the paths weeded and raked, the place looked charming.

The month there was one full of benefit. In the five months since its formation the Battalion had not had a great many casualties, and the smartness born of two months' barrack-square training in England was still to be seen. But it had had over three months in the trenches, and was eager to stretch its limbs on the wide training grounds. It is a heavy strain upon a military unit to lose officers, non-commissioned officers and men in fairly large numbers, and then, after a short interval spent in the trenches, to lose more. Each time reinforcements replace the casualties, but if the process is repeated several times, the whole loses its cohesion; it becomes a team with no combination. Doubtless at the end of the summer most regiments are in this condition unless they have been fortunate enough to get long spells behind the lines in between their engagements. The 3rd Battalion, however, was "in the pink." Many of its officers and non-commissioned officers were veteran soldiers, who had either been posted to its ranks direct from France, or been serving in England as instructors at our base camps, and a large proportion of the men were recruited from the convalescent camps. Their two months in England had consolidated them all, and the three months in the trenches gave the inexperienced ones a knowledge of war. They were now ready for a big advance.

We had everything we wanted at Henneveux: extensive fields for Company training, a miniature rifle range, field firing ground and Brigade manoeuvre area. With such opportunities for practising the attack, it would have been anything but a credit had the Battalion not known its intricacies. As part of our lessons the Companies and the Battalion, and eventually the Brigade, waged mimic battles with fierce intensity.

The inspection of the Division by Sir Douglas Haig was a brilliant affair. This time the parade ground was not a muddy *pavé* road, but a wide expanse of meadow, and practically every unit was there. The Commander-in-Chief, who was accompanied by the Right Hon. Winston Churchill, M.P., rode down the ranks of the Division drawn up in line, and the Battalions and Companies of the other Services then turned to the right and marched past in Column of Platoons. Sir Douglas Haig shook hands with all Battalion Commanders as he passed down. He was kind enough to say to me that he was proud to include the Division in his Command, and that it had always done more than it was asked to do, and from a soldier that was high praise.

The Battalion had a long march from its billets to the Parade Ground, and by the time it arrived home again it had been going twelve hours. On the way back, the Y.M.C.A. Officer set up his movable canteen on the road, and every man was given a cup of hot cocoa and some biscuits. This institution has played a great part in the lives of our soldiers in France. It has followed them into the trenches and its officers have shared all the dangers and hardships of the war. In all kinds of weather, by night and by day, always when asked, and very often on their own initiative, these voluntary workers have given our men refreshment at moments when they were most in need of it.

Lieut.-General Sir Alex. Godley receiving prize at New Zealand Division Horse Show.

Inspection of New Zealand Division by Sir D. Haig. Passing 3rd Battalion Wellington Regiment.

Looking north-east from Waterloo Farm, October 5th, 1917

Waterloo Farm, October 5th. 1917.

Ruins of cathedral, Ypres.

German pill-box near St. Loos.

Battalion Headquarters, Hill 63, just above Red Lodge.

"Paddy," Battalion mascot 1st Wellington.

Opportunity was taken of the 1st, 2nd and 4th Brigades being together to have a joint Church Parade of the three Battalions of the Regiment. It was an historic occasion, and General Russell paid the Regiment the compliment of being present. Afterwards, the officers lunched together at the Headquarters of the 1st Battalion, and in the afternoon a football match was played between the 1st and 2nd Battalions, the former winning by 15 points to 3.

Before we left Henneveux, Lieutenant-Colonel Cook, D.S.O., gave the officers and noncommissioned officers of the 3rd Battalion a very interesting account of the part the 1st Battalion played at the Battle of Messines, and his description of the doings of his Companies must have stirred the imaginations of the leaders of their kindred Companies in the 3rd Battalion.

The main road to Boulogne lay not far from Henneveux, and leave to that seaport town was given during part of our time in rest. The men used the Army motor lorries on such occasions as their conveyances. They are, in fact, the soldier's omnibus, and if you told a soldier that he had to find his way from Havre to Dunkirk by road, I doubt whether he would walk very much of the distance. The British Government has many thousands

of this type of vehicle in France, and I see it is a problem for the Demobilization Committee to put them on the market after the war without causing a glut.

Our holiday was terminated rather unceremoniously, and we struck camp and departed on a few hours' notice. That was on the 25th September, and until the early morning of the 4th October the weather was glorious--- sunny days and bright, moonlight nights. The first day we marched twelve miles to the Hamlet of Seninghem, the second day nine miles to Arques, a manufacturing place outside St. Omer, and the last day eighteen miles to the Eecke Area. The older men or those with any physical defect can carry on with most of their duties, but long marches with "full pack up" find them out : they cannot do them. As long as a Battalion is liable to be ordered to move any great distance by road, such men are a source of danger, because if they fall out others follow their example, and a Battalion Commander, in self protection, must have them evacuated as unfit. And yet it is seldom long marches have to be faced, and otherwise these older men are often useful soldiers and supply stability and backbone to a section. There were more of this class in the 3rd Battalion than in the 1st and 2nd, I suppose because the Base Camps were cleared of everybody to fill the ranks of the new Brigade. At Eecke we stayed two days. There we parted company with those who were detailed for the Reinforcement Camp, and so would not see the fight. The rest gave Headquarters and the Company Commanders an opportunity to do much of the administrative work necessary before going into action, and of which there is a considerable amount. The preparation of the rolls is an important part of it : from them the casualty lists are prepared and checked. It is difficult to keep the casualty returns up to date in the middle of a battle, but difficulties increase the longer they are neglected. A man may be blown absolutely to pieces and not a trace of him ever seen again, but another in his section noticed him a few moments before sitting in the trench where the shell burst. This man himself may be killed within the next few hours, and his evidence be no longer available

The return of "missing" men is a vague one, and we made every effort to reduce their numbers. The Companies were mustered after an engagement, and any information obtained that would assist was recorded. The cabled advice to a soldier's next of kin that he is "missing" carries with it a load of fear, hope and despair, that must be borne for weeks to come. The only real chances are that he may be a prisoner of war, or turn up in Hospital, having been wounded and evacuated without his section leaders knowing of it. If it is the latter case his name is eventually sent back to the Battalion by our records office, who are informed of all soldiers admitted to the Hospitals. In the former case word reaches us through Switzerland in a few weeks. Lately it has been suggested that the Germans are not reporting prisoners at once, but using them in shelled areas, and if any are killed nothing more is said. In the mind of a mother or wife these two cases do not exhaust the alternatives ; hope never dies. There have been rare instances of missing men appearing months after, and uncertainty continues to tear them both ways.

From Eecke we motored up to the Trenches in lorries, and reconnoitred our battle ground by daylight. There was very little shelling from the enemy guns and we obtained a clear view of our Battalion objectives. By this time the whole scheme of attack had been elaborated, and the Company Commanders knew what part their men were to play in it. Fortunately, in that expanse of undulating country without many distinctive features on its surface, our Battalion area contained a road and some trees and a remarkable Pill Box that acted as marks for Company boundaries, and on our reconnaissance the Company Commanders impressed them on their minds and afterwards explained them to their men.

The objectives were strictly limited: the Brigade and probably the three attacking Corps were to advance 1,700 yards and there entrench themselves. Everything would be done in the conventional way. We should assemble overnight, and at zero hour, which no doubt would be a little before daylight, our guns would open and we should move on behind their Barrage. When we had reached a certain point the Barrage would halt and we also. The men would dig in there, and be relieved in the course of forty-eight hours or more. The last advance had been made a few days before, so the enemy expected another at any moment, at some point on a ten-mile front. His Artillery inactivity was curious, but probably his guns had been registered one by one, on ground over which we must advance, and then covered up again. Our preponderance in guns seemed enormous. It is too early to adjudge upon the merits and demerits of the Theory of the Limited Objective as compared with Ludendorff's Tactics, but it is clear the former in no way resembles a War of Movement.

The 1st and 4th Brigades of the Division were to attack side by side, the latter being on the right. On its right was the 3rd Australian Division, and on the left of the 1st Brigade, an English Division. The 4th Brigade frontage was approximately 800 yards, and included the village of Gravenstafel and the Abraham Heights,

which formed a spur of the famous Passchendaele Ridge. The system of "leap-frogging" was to be adopted, and when 3rd Auckland and 3rd Otago had occupied the first objective---the Red Line---3rd Canterbury and 3rd Wellington would pass through them on to the second objective-the Blue Line. The objectives themselves were marked by no particular features : the trenches and pill boxes and ruined farmhouses between us and the Red and Blue Lines were the real objectives. Third Wellington was behind 3rd Otago, and the latter's area embraced Wimbledon dug-outs and Van Meulen Farm, while ours included Gravenstafel Village, Berlin Pill Boxes and Waterloo Farm. I anticipated stouter resistance from the enemy the nearer we came to the Blue Line, and therefore decided to give Ruahine Company (Lieutenant A. J. Williams) the task of capturing Gravenstafel Village, and to divide up the remainder of the area between Wellington West Coast Company (Captain B. H. Morison) and Taranaki Company (Major A. E. M. Jones), keeping Hawke's Bay Company (Captain F. S. Varnham) in reserve.

We completed our reconnaissance and returned to the motor lorry, which was waiting for us at the bottom of the road. In the meantime the Battalion had moved up from the Eecke area to Clyde Camp, west of Poperinghe. We had taken longer than we thought we should, and as we were late for our own mess dined at the officers' club in Poperinghe. The Hun aeroplanes were busy and while we were having dinner dropped several bombs in the town. One fell in the next street, and a messenger succeeded in getting a doctor from amongst the officers at the table to attend to the wounded. The aerial bombs are fitted with an instantaneous fuse, and explode immediately they touch the ground, with a wide, low spread of the fragments. A man sleeping on a low stretcher would be hit, whereas if he had been on the floor he might have escaped.

Clyde Camp consisted of tents and a large barn, and Headquarters mess was a table in the open field. We spent a day there, and had all our meals outside, even dinner in the moonlight. Throughout the two nights we spent there the aeroplanes dropped bombs. The horrible moment was when one instinctively felt the machines were directly overhead. The second evening, as we sat smoking after dinner, one of the enemy airmen was discovered by our searchlights, which pointed him out white and distinct to the anti-aircraft guns, who hammered at him. Several times we thought he was down, but he managed to escape. Third Canterbury was the unlucky Battalion of the Brigade : bombs fell among its transport, killing many of its most valuable animals.

On the 1st October the Battalion discarded everything but fighting kit and marched to a bivouac behind,. Goldfish Château. This once handsome brick building, about two miles from Ypres, now presented rather a dejected appearance, shells at various times having knocked spots out of it. The bivouac was a bare paddock, but the men dug holes in the ground in which to sleep, so that an aeroplane bomb could only injure them by a direct hit. I walked round the lines after they had all turned in. They had had a tiring march. The road was crowded with all kinds of traffic, coming and going, the delays had been tedious and the dust awful. With their waterproof sheets they had made tent-like protections against the dew of the clear, moonlight night, but their cardigan jackets and the warmth of each other's bodies were their only means of fighting the cold. However, they slept soundly. In less than forty-eight hours many of them would be sleeping the soundest sleep of all.

We had parted with the transport that afternoon, as they had taken up their quarters with the other transport of the Brigade two or three miles further back, at Brandhoek Area. The Quartermaster and his staff and the Band remained there also, and formed a Miniature Base for the Battalion. In days gone by the Bandsmen were employed as stretcher-bearers, but it was too difficult to replace losses amongst them, and other duties were given to them. Lieutenant Coltman, the Quartermaster, and Lieutenant Stables, the Transport Officer, were good administrators, and there was no anxiety as to supplies reaching the men at the front. Poor Stables was killed a few days after the commencement of our advance. While taking the rations up he was delayed on the narrow road by a block in front of him. The country on each side was a swamp, and while he waited a shell got him.

Next morning I bicycled up to Wieltje Dug-out, with Lieutenant-Colonel Rowe, of 3rd Canterbury, to a conference of Battalion Commanders with General Russell and the Brigadier. This conference was held in one of the familiar box rooms of these underground dug-outs. Details of the advance were carefully considered, and points made by the Divisional Commander. Brigade Headquarters later in the day established themselves in a German Pill Box called Pommern Redoubt, nearly a mile further up, and 3rd Otago and 3rd Auckland took over the present front line from the 2nd Brigade. Third Canterbury and ourselves (less eight Platoons) moved from the bivouacs below Ypres into the old British Front Line before the 31st July. Across

the St. Jean Road, which ran along our left boundary, was 2nd Wellington, and I had dinner in their Headquarters mess. As usual they were keen for a fight. We should not be alongside them. First Wellington took the Red Line and 2nd Auckland the Blue Line immediately on our left; 2nd Wellington were on their left again. I had lunch with Lieutenant-Colonel Blair, in his little, cave off the trench, to which I succeeded when he moved out in the afternoon .

Between us and Abraham Heights lay a small ridge called Hill 37 (from its height in metres) and another valley, and it was from Hill 37 that we obtained our view of Gravenstafel and the Heights. A duck-walked track ran half way to the summit and our Engineers were working hard to carry it still further. This track was to be the road by which we should reach our Assembly Points. The Hun Artillery was practically silent, except for bursts on our Front Line, and his aeroplanes seemed to go further back with their missiles, so work was uninterrupted. The Pioneers also were making huge efforts to repair the St. Jean Road. There was no truce, however, for our guns of all calibres were practising Barrages, and doing destructive shoots day and night.

It was a weird scene of devastation; destruction on all sides, and the Mark of Cain seemed upon the land. Before one reached our present Front Line one passed by German Pill Boxes, scattered here and there in haphazard fashion. Their capture had entailed many bitter struggles, still evidenced in some cases by the dead lying round. The country itself might have represented Dante's Inferno. Every square yard of it seemed foul with slaughter.

October 3rd was a busy day. The eight Platoons came up from Goldfish Château, and everyone received their load for the Battle-picks, shovels, S.O.S. grenade rockets, six sand-bags, etc. Don Quixote was not more heavily laden than a modern "digger." The officers were able to show their non-commissioned officers the objectives and to identify them on the maps. My own task was to find a suitable assembly ground for the Battalion, and this we discovered near the top of Hill 37. The duckwalks had been laid to the spot we chose, the Companies could bivouac in the order in which they would advance, and directly the guns opened up at zero hour they would go straight ahead. The Barrage Time Table included a wait of two hours after the Red Line was occupied, to allow for delays anticipated on other parts of the front, but it seemed wiser for us to follow hard on the heels of Otago at zero hour, rather than to have to negotiate the Hun Barrage later on in daylight. By keeping close to them, we might possibly get inside his Barrage before it came down. This undulating country possesses no distinctive features visible at night, and elaborate precautions are necessary to keep the troops to their proper front.

This very battle afforded a good instance of the danger. One Brigade followed the contour of the ground, and inclined to the left. A wide gap was left, but one of the Companies noticed it, and remedied the situation as well as possible until other arrangements were made. A road ran parallel along our front and the gaunt trunks of its avenue of trees would enable us to locate it in the dark before sunrise.

In the afternoon, after a Brigade conference, I went over the Assembly Ground with the Company Commanders, who left some men there to guide the Companies to their places later on. I had chosen a large shell-hole in the morning for Battalion Headquarters, and our Pioneers were making some sort of cover over it, so that we could write in it without being seen. That evening the Companies one by one left the old trench and moved up No. 5 Track, as it was called, to the Assembly Ground. The men ensconced themselves in shell-holes, and improved and deepened them, and there the Battalion lay for the night. About midnight the weather broke, and a light rain fell. The enemy gunners seemed to waken up, for all night they shelled us intermittently, but although several men were "blown up," we had few casualties.

We snatched a few hours' sleep, and twenty minutes before zero emerged from our burrows to a wet, bleak morning, with a cold wind blowing from the Hun lines. It was pitch dark, but the men quickly mustered. A few minutes before zero the enemy guns spoke up, and we cursed our heavies who, we imagined, had roused their suspicions, but it was learned afterwards that the enemy was himself massing for attack, and when our Barrage commenced it did fearful execution amongst his troops in their Assembly Trenches. However, we had no time for speculation then, and on the Dogs of War being loosed we went ahead. The going was heavy, and consequently slow. The four Companies and Headquarters were in five columns abreast, each in single file, separated by about one hundred yards. We crossed the top of the hill, and dropped sharply down into the little valley in which our Front Line lay, and, turning my head, I could see in the semi-darkness the

Companies winding over the summit like snakes. Silhouetted against the skyline, they might have been long caravans creeping over the desert.

The noise from the guns was intense, and by now the enemy's Barrage had come down, and his shells were dropping round our Columns. We were in the valley, but not yet in direct touch with the Otagos, but we must not allow the two Battalions to be mixed up, and our own Barrage was close, as we could see from the bursting shells, so we had to go slowly. The enemy shells increased in number. It became necessary to use the compass to keep direction, and Headquarters marked time to enable me to take a bearing. We happened to be correct, but the Company, on our right was boring across our front, and I sent my Adjutant, Lieutenant H. E. Crosse, to tell them to alter their direction. We halted to prevent cannoning into them. and the next thing I knew I was on my face on the ground, with an intense pain in the hip. A shell had burst close by, and it felt as if a large clod of hard earth had struck me. However, my signalling officer, Lieutenant Edwards, put his hand over the place, and at once said I was wounded. At this moment Crosse returned. It had been arranged beforehand that if anything happened to me Captain Varnham should take over the Battalion, and Crosse asked me whether he should advise him. In the meantime the Column had passed and Crosse left me to rejoin it.

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CHAPTER XIII

HOSPITAL

FROM the moment the doctor left me with my batman, who came to my assistance directly I fell, and hastened after the advancing Column, I ceased to be a combatant. I was no longer a soldier, but some other person; still an individual perhaps, and yet not quite. I became a patient, and a patient I have been for more months than I care to count. I still wear the King's uniform it is true, but as I have been branded P.U. (Permanently Unfit) it is only by courtesy, and in a few weeks I shall have it pressed and folded away. Will Time then set to work with his iron, to smooth out the furrow made on my brain by the war ?

But I am wandering; I left myself lying in the shell-hole in the darkness preceding dawn, while Lange went over to a couple of stretcher-bearers a few yards away, who seemed to be making ready to carry out a man near them, to ask them to come back for me later. Lange returned with the news that they were coming for me now, so evidently the man by them was beyond human aid. I was half carried and half got myself on to the stretcher, and the two bearers with Lange alongside made straight for the Ypres Road. Progress was slow on the slippery shell-bitten, ground, and the enemy's barrage became thicker and thicker. Fortunately the mud rendered the effect of the shells local, and huge columns of dirt and water shot into the air with each explosion. They seemed to me more like large bombs than shells. Of course, at the time, every "moment of terror" seems the worst and the longest, but I do think that was the hottest corner I had ever been in, and I lay on the stretcher and thought that it would be nothing short of a miracle if we escaped.

And just then another one went off in a shell-hole full of water alongside the stretcher and hit the two bearers. Lange and I were unhurt, it seemed then. I craned my neck and saw the bearer at my head falling gently forward with the blood running down his forehead. His foot was entangled in the shoulder-strap, and I could not for the life of me get at it to loosen its grip. He fell on one knee, and while in that position seemed to recover himself, and with his field dressing bound up his head. Here Lange took charge and suggested our only hope was for me to walk. The bearers said they would be all right, and I agreed with no hesitation. If it had only been suggested to me before I believe I could have done without the stretcher. I put my arm round Lange's neck, and with my stick struggled on. A few moments after a Taranaki Lance-Corporal caught up to us on his way out with two fingers shot away and very kindly turned himself into a crutch on the other side. The difficulty was to find ground wide enough for three abreast, but we hobbled out of the Barrage and then Lange and I managed to reach a regimental Aid Post that lay across our track. The Doctor's dressing had slipped down and, while the Medical Orderly was applying another, I discovered a hole through the back of my steel helmet, and the orderly found another wound in my head. It must have been a part of the shell that wounded the two bearers.

There were several German prisoners around and I chose one that seemed the right height to lean upon and off we started again. The wound was stiff and painful, and I found walking difficult, but I felt that the sooner

we were out the better. We had come to peaceful waters again and the way ahead seemed clear. We had not gone far when it occurred to Lange that he might get three other Germans, and the four could carry us out, and full of his idea he hurried back. Five minutes elapsed and the German gunners took it into their heads to barrage the track, and a row of shells dropped. one by one ahead and behind. My prisoner assistant and I stood inside a broken concrete pill box and waited. The shells still came, and no sign of Lange. An awful thought pressed itself on my brain that he had been hurt; and his appearance a few minutes later was a huge relief. The four Germans carried a stretcher easily; they were well-built, dapper little men, and kept step together, as if on a drill ground. And high up on their shoulders I went down the road to the Advanced Dressing Station.

On each side were the guns in rows still blazing away ; I caught sight of some gunners stripped to the waist. By now the Battalion would be tightening their belts before going through 3rd Otago to their first objective. Half way to the Station One of my Germans stumbled on the dead body of a soldier lying on their path; a blood-vessel had broken on. his way out, and all the bearers could do was to tip his body off the stretcher and trudge back for others.

The Dressing Station was in the Wieltje Dug-out; a biggish affair under ground. There seemed to be a block here. The ammunition lorries must be given precedence and the wounded wait. Things had gone well, and with the guns moving up later in the day shells and more shells were wanted. Prisoners were coming down in considerable numbers. My stretcher slid down the inclined way into the Dug-out and on the damp floor of the dark passage to the Dressing Room I waited in company with a dozen others. Cocoa was given to us and it was explained that we must wait until the lorries had returned and the motor ambulances could get up. This gave Lange an opportunity to come down and say goodbye. I did not like leaving him behind to it all, but I should be back in a few weeks and in the meantime he could look after my things, including "Billy" the dog. None of the wounded spoke, only one murmured, and he was injured in the head and unconscious. However, it did not seem long before our stretchers moved up one by one, and by the process of elimination mine eventually got there. The dressing had again come off, and Captain Kemp applied another, altered the description of my hip wound on the ticket and, with a cheery word, moved me on. Another wait when the A.D.M.S., who happened to pass, assured me I had a typical "Blighty," and then once more out into the light and on to an ambulance. Since I had been under ground a German shell had burst on the side of the road opposite the mouth of the Dug-out and killed and wounded several.

A visit to the Corps dressing station, where we lay around on our stretchers and had more cocoa and were interviewed by several rather lugubrious Padres, and then on to an ambulance again and so to the Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. They had only come up the day before, they said, but it was comfort indeed lying on a bed. I was not undressed as my destination was still further, although the Canadian doctor hummed and ha'd at my head. Finally he decided it was only a scalp wound, and I was marked for the Hospital Train.

The day was going and it was after dark before the train moved out of the siding. I have only one happy recollection of that journey, the plate of hot Army stew for dinner. My clothes were wet through and felt clammy and cold and, lie in whatever position, I could not get comfortable; each move seemed to bring me on top of more of the gear that I was jealously guarding, field glasses, steel helmet, map case and stick, for when the stretcher-bearers been hit in the early morning, Lange had been obliged to jettison most of my impedimenta. The wound was stiff now. However, everything has its end. Thoughts of Calais, Dover and London as a happy itinerary occurred and recurred during that long night, but we left the railway yards of Calais and then Boulogne behind and at two m the morning halted at Etaples. A motor journey in the cold mist, another wait in the-receiving room of the Hospital to have further additions made to one's ticket, and then along the duck-walked covered way to the ward. And there the---prison---doors closed upon me; two weeks in France, seven weeks in London, and five months at Walton-on-Thames, and now in a Convalescent Home.

It has been a queer experience, and I am not sure that it has not been the queerest of all of the last three years. I entered into what is a different world. A Hospital is a thing apart from anything else, and now that one has passed through its regime, I feel that one would face it better and with less discomfort were one called upon to do so again. It has its laws, written and unwritten, mostly the latter, and they cannot be learned in a day. Moreover, the opportunity of learning them beforehand has gone when you become a patient, for there is no teacher but experience, and in a Utopian Army all soldiers would be lectured by competent Instructors on "Life in Hospital."

It is an opinion generally held that the moment a patient is undressed and snuggles in between the cool white sheets of his ward bed, his troubles are ended; he no longer has any responsibilities, he has cast them upon the Doctors and Nurses. Of a truth his duties have only begun, and no one has more need of coolness, judgment and a sound philosophy than the sick man entering the gates of a Hospital. Unfortunately, his very state often robs him of the qualities he most needs, but none the less they are required, and very much so. Coolness and self-control are the most valuable of them all in the peculiar circumstances. Wounds seem unlike diseases; they do not run the same definite course; a wounded man has his ups and downs, and must simply face each day as it comes. He must not be content, either, with that limitation; even within the twenty-four hours it is of no use anticipating trouble. "Don't worry, and keep quiet," are not bad instructions. With pain and sleeplessness, the more restless you are the worse they become ; lie perfectly still, and you baulk them to some extent. To a sick man, trouble stares him in the face ---not troubles of the present, but ghostly ones that threaten him in the immediate future, and few of them materialize.

In one's healthy days the idea of staying in bed for a week was horrible, and yet many men are staying in bed for months, and are cheerful and almost happy. The truth is there is hardly any limit to the power of adaptation to circumstances that we possess. Among my varied experiences was to lie spread-eagle fashion on a double abduction Thomas' splint for seven weeks. I could only move my arms and wriggle my toes, and still the seven weeks went, although I must frankly admit their memory, if I allow myself to dwell on it, is as of some horrible thing. I am not quite sure why, but I fancy the anticipation of what it would be like, has overruled in my brain the impression the time actually made upon me. Six weeks in a plaster cast like the sarcophagus of a mummy were far more jovial. The cast and I could lie on either side at an angle of thirty degrees, and we went for rides in a spinal chair. When I discarded it and its lining of cotton wool, the bed seemed very hard and inhospitable.

The days pass quickly enough in hospital, there is so much to do. The nights are slower, but in a large ward there is always something going on, even after the lights are out. During the first week or two, when temperatures run high, men have queer dreams; perhaps they are something more than dreams, for they are very real. Every night I was a Field Ambulance and had to march from one place to another in France ---a day's march. I was the whole Unit ; so many hundred men, equipment, horses, vehicles, etc. I had little knowledge of the organization of the Medical Corps, which made my task no easier, and the worry and anxiety I experienced every night were indescribable; the sensation of having so many Egos was in itself fantastic. To a man who cannot sleep, the early call for washing---4 a.m. in France---is welcome, and the cup of tea nectar. There we were a friendly party, all on intimate terms with each other. It was a long hut, with beds close together, and only a narrow passage in the middle.

Different men face the pain and confinement in different ways; the more highly-strung find it hard, very hard, but the great majority of those I met were brave, patient philosophers. Many of them had not only their present to endure, but a maimed and dislocated future to face. I do not remember hearing one of them grumble at his luck, and some of them had every reason to curse their fates in their hearts. Some had to undergo operation after operation, and often they were the ones whom the anæsthetic upset so much for days after. One cannot help pitying the limbless men, who feel a dull ache in the lost part for weeks after the amputation---a harsh reminder of their loss.

There are some who find it difficult coming in from the field, where they have been surrounded by men of whom they have been in command, to be controlled by the other sex, whose duty it now is to look after them. The sisters and nurses naturally like doing their work in their own way, and the soldiers have grown accustomed to insisting on everything being done as they ordain. It takes time to become adjusted to the new conditions and adds a little to the irksomeness of the life. There are others who, with open treason and I am sure secret shame, declare they prefer men nurses ; that women are ruled by their feelings, and a deep and intuitive sympathy is not general in the sex. Unless they like a patient, these iconoclasts say, some nurses are as graven images. Of course this is heresy, and the very heretics will give you the names of patient, kind women, who grudge the least thing undone to make their patients comfortable. However, there are undoubtedly women who are unsuited for nursing, just as there are doctors who were never destined for their profession. It is the same with the men orderlies ; some should not have been allowed near a Hospital ; there are others whose steady, sure hands seem to know instinctively how pain can be avoided and where ease lies.

The day when I was to be allowed up, at last, was to be a red-letter one, but I went through a certain amount of tribulation before getting up was any pleasure. Habit had so possessed me that there was no great

inclination to make the effort, and it was necessary to learn to walk all over again.

But day by day it was easier, and I think every day one was a little more grateful that there was still happiness in the open air and in the power of movement. Lange, who had been badly gassed and invalided to England, was now on the Hospital Staff in my ward, and helped me to get about.

1 was fortunate in having a visitor who came every day, once I reached England, and for whose arrival at visiting hours I eagerly looked. Many men had no one and felt their loneliness. The New Zealand War Contingent Association has organized its visiting well, and even in the Hospitals in more or less remote corners of England our men are sought out by its official visitors. Also the policy of our Government has been sound in providing our own General Hospitals at Walton-on-Thames, at Codford and at Brockenhurst. I have a firm belief in the policy of mixing together men from all parts of the Empire; apart from other things, it is for our benefit coming from an island in the Antipodes. But I hold the opinion that when a man is wounded he requires moral assistance as well as medical skill and nursing. The injury is a shock to his nerve and mentality, and he wants petting and spoiling to help him up again. And this is what we get in our own Hospitals. My arrival at Walton on the 3rd December, to me, was a home-coming. I was amongst my own people again, familiar faces, familiar talk and kindness indescribable. The curious medley of horror and happiness in my memory of the months in Hospital contains a deep and sincere gratitude for the care I received at Walton.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE NEW ZEALANDER

ALTHOUGH the New Zealanders are the youngest branch of the family, their three score years and ten of vigorous, healthy life have stamped them with a separate Nationhood. Their grandfathers were of a sturdy type that readily faced, with their wives and families, the discomforts and dangers of a three months' voyage in what were not very much more than fishing smacks, to the furthermost part of the world, and there fought with Nature for a living. Many of them eventually found themselves engaged in a bloody struggle with the Maori inhabitants, lasting for several years. Such men and women were the forbears of what. is a proud and brave race to-day.

For many years past, New Zealand has been enriched with a steady stream of selected immigrants from the United Kingdom and, in smaller numbers, from the Continent. Whether it is due to the climate or the democratic, liberty of a young country it is difficult to say, but the new-comers soon absorb its virility and independence. Still, it would be hardly right not to say the New Zealand Division contains many who really call themselves by the name of the country they had left but a few years ago to emigrate to New Zealand. And, moreover, we are indebted to a good many English Imperial Officers, who were on loan to the Dominion when war broke out, or have been attached to the Division since. [NOTE: The Commandant of the N.Z.E.F., Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Godley, and its Chief Executive Officer in England Brigadier-General G. S. Richardson, both came from the Regular Army.]

But the Dominion of New Zealand is represented in the Division now in France, and in the characteristics of its members are seen those of the Young Race.

Some cynics affirm that earnestness is incompatible with a sense of humour. A sense of humour is undeveloped in the young, and as races are only collections of individuals, it may be that we have no great fund of that happy trait. And that is more probably so because the New Zealander is certainly earnest. He has a keenness and an earnestness that will always carry him through. At school, and later in life, it was that type of fellow that. succeeded. He was often not very companionable, and did not seem to have much fun, but he attained his goal. There was an element of robust solidity about him.

With other Colonials, the New Zealanders share the faculty of retaining their balance whatever happens: they are always masters of the situation. The man who, in spite of "alarums and excursions," can say, "Oh, that's nothing," and carry on, is a strong man and a leader. As a matter of fact, nearly all our men are leaders. It is a remarkable thing, the capacity for leadership in the rank and file. In my own Company, promotion to non-

commissioned rank went by seniority if the next on the list were reasonably fitted for it, and very few indeed missed their turn when it came. Almost without exception, the New Zealander possesses the gift of leadership that enables him to fill the hardest position in the British Army---the man who is of the rank of Private with the appointment of Lance-Corporal. My respect goes whole-heartedly to the non-commissioned officer, and especially to the Lance-Corporal. He lives with his section, they have been his greatest pals, and now he is to rule them. His word must be law, and it is only by sheer force of character that he can do it. Unless he is the leader and has the capacity for governing men, his is an impossible task. The truth is, in New Zealand, democracy is a real thing. With compulsory primary education, free secondary education liberally granted, and university education within the reach of the scholarship winner and of the sons of men of moderate means, the rising generation of the Dominion is well educated, and the ordinary citizen is under no disadvantage as compared with his social superior in that respect. Further, its population is small, and, figuratively speaking, everyone knows each other. The consequence is class distinctions are few. This nurtures the seed of independence and gives all ranks a confidence that serves them in such good stead when their turn for promotion comes. A man's social position or occupation in civil life has counted for little in the selection of officers in the field, as far as the New Zealand Division is concerned. A young farm hand and a house painter made two of the most gallant and efficient officers I knew. They were selected because they were senior in service and had made good non-commissioned officers. Perhaps the Commander's task is made easier by the men themselves, who are by nature orderly. They have inherited the deference to law and order that distinguishes the Old Race.

I have heard Imperial Officers on service in New Zealand express astonishment at the rapidity with which our men absorb instruction. They rather wondered whether it might not be forgotten just as quickly, but there is no doubt knowledge is easily attained. It may be a native inquisitiveness has something to do with it; they seem to want to know all about their surroundings, and to have the intelligence to grasp the situation. A certain mental restlessness will not leave them content with only sufficient information to carry out their duties; they find out more. Our Military Police, perhaps, are typical of this trait. They generally know more than what is happening at their own Cross Roads. "They possess a directness of vision, and what the Americans call 'horse sense,' a practical grasp of realities."[*Evening Standard.]*

As to physique, there are hot arguments whether our firm friends, the Australians, are not bigger men than we are, and the first 100,000 Americans looked huge fellows, but undeniably the average New Zealander is of fine physique, and would have little excuse if he were not the excellent rifle shot and the untiring worker with the spade that he is. Perhaps it is his physique that makes him generally cheerful under all conditions. He is seldom out of temper; really more like a big school-boy. One can carry the analogy of the young nation and the youth of its characteristics too far, but it is curious that, like youngsters, our men are not wonderfully tidy and neat as a rule. It is many months before they develop the soldierly carriage one sees in the well-trained British Line Regiments, and I doubt whether they take such a pride in their personal appearance as the "Tommy" does. Again they are a little shy of endeavouring to salute with the vim shown by the English soldiers: it is not because they are less anxious to show respect to their officers, for I am sure their rather gauche salute conveys a genuine compliment, but they are afraid of appearing conspicuous and making fools of themselves. In quarters and trenches they are clean to a degree, but they have no great desire to make things look well, and there is consequently no incentive in their minds to go to extra trouble to attain extreme uniformity.

I am not sure they have not a silent contempt for the "spit and polish" theory, which is really very necessary in military life.

But they are brave fellows : quiet men with a big share of self-respect and self-restraint. If every nation must be given a national vice, most of our men would sell their souls for football, and a little gamble at "two up," or "crown and anchor," is a strong temptation to them. I could never bring myself to think very harshly of these two games. The life of a private soldier is largely without hobbies or amusements. Reading is almost out of the question, even to those who find it a pleasure ; football is not open to them every day; concerts soon tire and cinema theatres are scarce. The "two up" ring is their billiard room or bridge table, and they require something of the kind: to a man who has given up a comfortable mode of living and perhaps has left behind a wife and family, unless he is consumed with ambition to rise in his new sphere, the life at the front cannot be anything but uninviting. He lives under the conditions of a "swagger" or "tramp," although he does not have that gentleman's privacy, he has no change of clothes, and sleeps in everything he wears. Lice are always with him, and the immediate future contains nothing to which he may look forward with eagerness.

And yet I believe the men who really need our sympathy are few. The spark of ambition is in most of us, and the Private hopes for the proud day when he will be a Lance-Corporal. He has a future. Moreover, there is a magnetism about the life one cannot describe. It is a school-boy existence in many ways : men like boys are attractive people to live with, and the comradeships formed on active service are as strong as any in history. The very conditions, too, have an extraordinary way of bringing out the best in men, and selfishness is simply an impossibility. I doubt if many of the ones who are fortunate enough to come through unscathed will ever regret the months they spent in the Army.

The training and experience will prove, in the majority of cases, a great benefit. This war is not like the South African War. Discipline is its mainspring, and obedience to law and order has been unhesitating, because all reasonable men realize the times call for it. Method is another plank of the Army platform, and, above all, a monotonous insistence upon everything being done in the best possible way. Slipshod work is anathema, and it is precisely these three qualities that a young independent nation requires. We have been pushed out into the world while still very young, and we have been successful. Under such circumstances we must have discipline, methodical organization and the highest standards before us, if we hope to fulfil the Destiny Fate has given us.

If I may guard myself from the accusation of generalizing, for there are always many exceptions to most statements, I must admit I think the Padres with the Expeditionary Force have missed a very wonderful opportunity of influencing the rising generation of the Dominion. I have listened to a great many clergymen preaching to the soldiers under various conditions, and one's feeling has very often been of disappointment that they have failed to grasp the moment of great deeds. A man, and especially a boy, on active service is in a molten state. The life seems to bring all the best in him to the surface, and, unconsciously, he demands still more light and guidance. He is in a condition to receive impressions that will engrave themselves indelibly on his heart and brain. And what help do they offer ? A flow of words that he cannot understand, or that do not interest him. On the other hand sermons with illustrations from our own History on Patriotism, Self Sacrifice, Bravery and Obedience, would be heard by human beings eager for suggestions, and would do much to improve the moral standard of our country in after years. It may be that in criticizing the Padres one is condemning oneself. We officers do not appeal to the ethical side of the men enough. We might do so far more, and they would listen and act.

They are great fighters, deadly in offence, steadfast in defence. They enjoy a fight, but to most of them there is a job to be done, and they do it. No doubt their motives in coming to the war were complex, as is usually the case in men's decisions, but the gratitude which some English people are kind enough to express for the Dominion's Aid, perhaps displays a misconception on their part. New Zealand as a country is singularly loyal and patriotic, and to its manhood it is a matter of course that it shall stand by the Old Country in times of stress. There never has been a suggestion that any other action is possible. A grown-up son cannot desert his mother in her trouble. Moreover, the people of the Dominion are clear-eyed enough to see that the issue affects us all. As for the New Zealanders in France and Palestine, every one of them in his heart is proud that he still preserves the spark of patriotism within him, and that Fate has given him the opportunity to do his share for the Dominion and the Empire; and that Pride goes far to make him the gallant soldier that he is.

THE END

Printed at The. Chapel River Press, Kingston, Surrey.

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